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ABSTRACT

This final report describes activities and accomplishments of a cooperative project of the Colorado State University School of Education, Colorado State University Occupational Therapy Department, and the University of Northern Colorado Department of Health and Human Services Rehabilitation Counselor training program to develop a comprehensive individualized program to train professionals at the master's degree level in the provision of transition services. The project was also designed to provide rural school districts with staff development and technical assistance for helping students with disabilities make the transition from school to adult life. Thirteen students (nine education students and four occupational therapy students) received specialized training at the master's degree level. Distance learning and condensed courses were modified and integrated into the university programs to allow training opportunities for rural vocational instructors, occupational therapists, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and special educators to earn the transition specialization endorsement. Formal evaluation identified some problems with the program model, administration, and implementation and such positive program outcomes as development of partnerships between local districts and the universities. (Contains 18 references.) (DB)

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ED 422 680

PARTNERS IN TRANSITION: PREPARING TRANSITION SPECIALISTS

HO29F40040

(Training Personnel for the Education of the Handicapped)

FINAL REPORT

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July, 1997

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I. PROJECT ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to train professionals from a variety of fields to become transition specialists. Current legislation has emphasized the need for vocational educators, special educators, rehabilitation counselors, occupational therapists and social workers to receive training regarding issues and strategies around the transition of students with disabilities. Therefore, this grant will establish a multidimensional approach to provide education, training, technical assistance and skill enhancement to persons working in the field as well as preparing professionals to enter the field. Through a joint venture between the Colorado State University School of Education, Colorado State University Occupational Therapy Department, and the University of Northern Colorado Department of Heal and Human Services Rehabilitation Counselor training program, a comprehensive individualized program will prepare students and professionals in the field to assist individuals with disabilities successfully enter adult life.

Thus, the following goals guide the design and implementation of the project:

* Design and implement a 15-hour competency based endorsement program that prepares professionals in special education, vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, occupational therapy and related fields to meet the needs of students with disabilities transitioning from high school to adult life situations.
* To enhance the master's degree program specialization in transition within the School of education by minority recruitment efforts, addition of service learning activities, and infusion of vocational rehabilitation information into the curriculum.
* To develop a transition focus area in the occupational therapy master's program to increase the knowledge of occupational therapists regarding functional capabilities and service needs of persons with disabilities.
* To provide technical assistance to school districts and other state agencies by upgrading the skills of their staff in the area of transition and the needs of students with disabilities.
* To provide training opportunities for vocational instructors, rehabilitation counselors, occupational therapists, and other related professionals, working in rural areas to earn the transition specialist endorsement via distance learning formats.
* Administer, evaluate, and disseminate the program in an effective and efficient manner.
* In meeting these goals, the following priorities will be addressed:
* Identifying and meeting rural needs.

* Training personnel to provide transition assistance from school to adult roles.
* Promoting full qualifications for personnel serving youth with disabilities.
* Improving services for minorities and traditionally underserved populations.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Introduction

While Public Law 101-476 mandates transition planning and services for all students with special needs, little is available in the rules and regulations to guide transition practices in rural environments. To date, research and/or demonstration articles and presentations have reflected transition practices in primarily urban or suburban environments. These practices are difficult to replicate in rural environments where financial constraints of schools and community are prohibitive.

The rural areas of the state of Colorado are not exempt from these difficulties. According to the 1992 Colorado Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CCSPD), the area of transition remains the greatest single area of need in terms of personnel preparation. This finding corroborates the recent Colorado State Plan for Vocational Education, which acknowledges the growing need for educational personnel to work with students with disabilities in vocational education as part of successful transition outcomes. Additionally, simple compliance with the mandates of P.L. 101-476, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, mandates that an increasing number of educators and related service professionals become proficient in providing transition services. For professionals working in rural areas, the need is even greater, due to constant lack of resources (Coombe, 1993; Johnson, Pugach & Cook, 1993; Wei, Shapero & Boggess, 1993).

Occupational therapists (OT), whose primary goal is to provide "whole-person" services to students with disabilities, are ironically working very little with transition-aged students, and find themselves under prepared to provide transition-related services. A recent nationwide study of school-based occupational therapists (Inge, 1995) found that only 29% of the OT's actually worked with students in the transition ages of 14-22. The survey found that while the average occupational therapist serves somewhere around 34 children birth of 13 years of age, the only served 6 students ages 14-16, three aged 17-19, and less than one child aged 20-22 (mean = 0.88). Additionally, when school OT's served transitioning youth, 67% stated that they did not assist in community-based goals and training. Only 20% of the educational teams did not understand the potential role of OT in the transition process. Furthermore, the OT's themselves felt they need much more training on OT for students in providing transition-related services.

With Colorado rural special educators experiencing tremendous challenges in providing mandated transition services, and with a potentially strong member of their service team (occupational therapy) usually not included in the process, some form of university-based

training intervention seemed appropriate. In the fall of 1993, the School of Education along with the Department of Occupational Therapy at Colorado State University applied for a staff development/personnel preparation grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. The project, titled "Partners in Transition" (PIT), was funded and began operation in the summer of 1994.

The purpose of the project is to create rural transition specialists in Colorado, through pre-service and in-service training for rural special educators and school-based occupational therapists. Each year of the three-year project, one team of special educators from a rural district were selected to participate in the PIT staff development project. Since at this time very few occupational therapists are included on school district transition teams, the Occupational Therapy Department selected two graduate students each year to be trained with the rural special education team, and to provide needed assistance with transition-related activities in the district the school year following the training.

The Partners in Transition project is structured entirely around rural service delivery issues in the area of transition. The issues addressed through the staff development activities include: continuing professional development in rural settings, isolation among professionals, need for creativity and ingenuity, small budgets, personality styles, empowerment, distance learning, self-assessment, and the use of community resources. The model has been developed in collaboration with, and piloted with a team of rural special educators, administrators, occupational therapy graduate students, and PIT project staff (university instructors). Fullan (1993) has described a staff development model with a goal of empowering learners. Fullan's model includes four steps: personal reflection, knowledge seeking, demonstration of new skills, and continued networking. The PIT training model is based on Fullan's model, and includes nine critical components:

1. Self Assessment

A comprehensive survey (*Transition Competency Assessment*), consisting of needed transition-related proficiencies is given to each team member prior to their participation in the project. The survey covers every skills necessary for transition team members to perform successfully. The survey includes such transition skill areas as: Assessment, Planning, Preparation/Training, Collaboration, and Leadership. Each team member completes the assessment, and includes examples of scenarios where their skills or lack of skills have most been exemplified. Once the surveys are collected and reviewed, the PIT project team begins developing the "Summer Institute" (based on the recommendations of Heller, 1991), which will be offered to assist the participants in developing the skills they feel they are lacking.

In the first year of the project, the surveys showed a variety of strengths and weaknesses, which were then distilled through a focus group meeting held with the participants. The focus group was held in the rural town which houses the team's Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) office. The results from the assessment surveys were used to develop the questions for the focus group. All the participants were required to attend the focus group, and to assist in developing a final document of overall learning needs of the team. For example, the project's first year the focus group meeting yielded a three item list of major learning needs related to transition: Communication, Family Involvement, and Resource Development. These topics then served as the basic for learning activities offered through the summer courses the participants attended.

2. Empowerment Activities

Although the project staff work at length with the special education administrators in participating districts as the initial assessment and training activities are developed, the administrators are encouraged before long to step back and let the participants control their own learning. Administrators are not included in the focus group or the summer classes. Project staff keep the administrators informed of agendas, syllabi, and upcoming educational events. The participants are also encouraged to increase communication with administrators to inform them of their progress. The participants, though, are given full rein in outlining needs, choosing learning activities and projects, and assisting in project evaluation. The administrators need to agree to give authority to the participants to carry out projects and activities within their own schools and within their communities. Without this agreement, the participants feel unempowered and stymied by "the system".

3. Use of Condensed Courses

All participants are expected to complete a specified set of classes to obtain their vocational credential from the Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System (CCCOES) as a "Transition Specialist". courses required for the credential include: 1) Career Development Institute, 2) Summer Transition Institute, 3) Transition and Community-Based Training and, 4) Occupational Information and Job Placement. Students desiring also to obtain their masters in education degree with an emphasis in transition services, must complete additional coursework, as well as a research project. The occupational therapy graduate students complete the same courses as the special educators working toward their "Transition Specialist" credential, but receive a completion certificate if they are ineligible for formal vocation credentialing.

4. Interdisciplinary Teaming Between Special Education and Occupational Therapy

The participating rural team was assigned two graduate occupational therapy students, as was mentioned above. The OT students participate in the condensed courses with the rural team, work side-by-side in the development of projects and learning activities, and them go with the rural team members back to their districts to assist in project implementation. During the condensed courses, the special educators and occupational therapy students compare official roles, desired roles, and areas where roles can be "released." During the PIT project, all team members have learned that special educators view occupational therapists very narrowly, assuming they are only "motor therapists," or hand-writing consultants. Both the OT students and the educators have learned to look at occupational therapy and its holistic approach to services, as an ideal discipline to address transition services.

5. Individualized Internship Opportunities

Each participant was required to complete one 3-credit internship in the area of transition. The OT students have a much longer internship requirement as part of their master's work. Once the participants completed the condensed courses and became knowledgeable about their individual learning needs, they are asked to design an internship to meet those needs. A formal contract is developed, containing goals, activities, and timelines. Each participant is then assigned a project staff member to serve as a support person as the individual implements his/her internship contract. One internship involved planning, fund-raising, and completing a ski program for students with emotional disorders who are in need of developing appropriate recreational skills. This internship included the use of one of the OT students to assist in designing ski lessons which would be helpful for youth with special needs. It was a powerful collaborative project between a special educator and an occupational therapist. Another internship involved a special educator meeting regularly with a program administrator from the local community college to learn how best to plug her students into postsecondary education opportunities.

6. Overcoming Problems of "Local History"

Many of the rural special educators are plagued by their school or program's history with the community and within the district. It is particularly difficult in rural areas to escape a reputation which is negative, whether it is deserved or not. The very nature of rural life is to keep track of what is going on in the community. This includes the schools. Through the Partners in Transition project, special educators are given the opportunity to explore how to create change, even when expectations from fellow teachers or community members is low. such phrases as, "We already tried that and it didn't work," are discouraged. Project participants

are challenged mentally to wipe the slate clean, and explore change which is unattached to history. New approaches to reaching and educating the community are explored, and the participants agree to support each other aggressively as they seek to implement changes in their programs and schools.

Personality styles and ways to deal with differences and conflicts are explored by participants. Each individual learns about their unique approach to their work and to people, and then seeks suggestions from others about how best to work with them. Once project participants become comfortable with their own styles, they are able to examine why they may get into conflict with co-workers, students, parents, and administrators. When participants are able to articulate areas of communication which are very difficult for them, they received advice and suggestions from others about actions they can take. Finally, the individuals come to realize that the very nature of their personality may make some activities insufferable, and that they need to learn to ask for help from others at those times, so that necessary activities are not placed on the mental "back burner" due to their undesirability.

7. Use of Community Supports

Participants in the Partners in Transition project were encouraged to view their local community as a partner in the transition planning process, instead of a judgmental adversary. Through their learning activities the participants describe elements needed to make transition successful for their students, and then decide how various entities in the community can help make it possible. Additionally, the participants plan how to keep the community informed of the students' transition activities, so that the community can feel as supportive of those students as they do student athletes or student scholars. One recent participant explored the possibility of highlighting transitioning students on place mats used at a popular local pizzeria. The goal of the publicity would be to brag about the students, let potential employers know the students are looking for good jobs, and drum up local support for the teachers and his program.

8. Education in Technology

A form of technology the participants in the PIT project were exposed to involves the world of telecommunications and computerized communication. All participants were trained to access an on-line service, and are given the opportunity to "surf" to see what resources are available in the "cyber world." Many of the participants have expressed excitement about learning how to look for grant funders, find special education literature, and to use electronic mail. Even though many of the participants do not have access to computers with on-line capabilities in their district, they have become enthusiastic about using their home computers for this purpose. The PIT staff are available to communicate with these individuals over the

computer, and hope to do more of this in the future. Unfortunately, as with many new and innovative teaching devices, the costs are often prohibitive to many rural school districts.

9. Distance Education Activities

Literature about training educators in rural areas suggests that distance education that combines face-to-face meetings and technology interaction provides information in a flexible and effective way (Kapczyk, Rhodes, Marce & Chapman, 1994; Jansen & Davies, 1996). When choosing the delivery modalities and information/experiences to be delivered, distance, cost, and effectiveness were all factors considered. Thus, as shown in Table 1, components of year one included condensed courses (i.e., an on-campus three day institute), networking sessions, E-mail, telephone and site visits by university faculty.

An important supplement to the condensed courses is the technical assistance offered by project staff to the participants, following completion of the condensed courses. This technical assistance is provided on-site out in the rural schools, through phone call consultations, through networking meetings with all participants at a nearby restaurant, and in some cases through the use of electronic mail. The participants continue their learning as they complete their chosen projects, implement short and long-term goals they have created, and seek to create change in "the system." Partners in Transition project staff services as resources on an as-needed basis.

In order to achieve this six goals were identified and subsequently accomplished. Each goal will be discussed along with accomplishments.

III. GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goal 1. Design and implement a competency-based endorsement program that prepares professional vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, special education, occupational therapy, and related fields to meet the needs of students with disabilities transitioning from school to adult life.

The decision to attack problems associated with transition services in local rural schools was based upon literature citing the importance of staff development efforts in rural settings. Staff development was selected as a strategy to target the deficiencies of teachers because it is widely acknowledged that staff development is necessary for motivating teachers to remain in the district (Helge, 1981; 1984; Westling & Whitten, 1996). Staff development for rural areas however, has been and continues to be problematic (Russell, Willis, & Gold, 1994). For instance, the distance between universities providing training to educators and occupational therapists and schools in outlying areas often prevents frequent face-to-face contact and makes attending classes difficult, particularly during inclement weather seasons. Geographic distances also mean that the university faculty is not aware of local issues and politics that make implementing changes in schools difficult.

Prior to the inception of the grant, competencies found in the literature deemed as crucial to the transition project were synthesized and in Table 1. This information was used as a framework for designing new courses, for changing existing courses and to begin the conversations with the districts regarding their needs.

Table 1. Transition-Related Competencies

Historical Framework and Philosophical Trends

1. Describe and discuss the philosophical and historical basis for the current and continuing "transition initiatives." This includes legislative mandates, rules, and regulations.

Planning

2. Demonstrate skill in conducting and documenting curriculum-based assessment that considers the abilities, interests, and needs of individuals with disabilities within educational, vocational, residential, and social environments.
3. Participate in the development of comprehensive, individualized transition plans, along with members of an interdisciplinary/interagency team.
4. In cooperation with team members, develop outcome-oriented goals and objectives on behalf of individuals with disabilities.
5. Demonstrate ability to evaluate the student's progress and modify his/her transitional plan accordingly.
6. Demonstrate the ability to perform career development, guidance, and advisement activities.

Collaboration

7. Identify and interact with adult service agencies involved in transition planning and service delivery.
8. Apply interpersonal communication skills to facilitate family inclusion and participation in transition-related activities.
9. Demonstrate professional skills as transition team members, including communication, documentation, and accountability.

Preparation

10. Identify training setting appropriate for individual with disabilities.
11. Design and implement a coordinated set of activities within outcome-based curricula suited to the needs of individual learners.
12. Demonstrate skill in modifying vocational curricula, materials, and equipment as necessary.
13. Demonstrate ability to manage the instructional environment by prioritizing learner needs, adhering to occupational safety rules.
14. Demonstrate skill in providing transition-related services and training in a variety of occupational training environments using many types of instructional methods.
15. Identify and teach skills to facilitate student self-determination.
16. Demonstrate skill in understanding, selecting, and utilizing assistive technology.

Outcomes

17. Demonstrate individual level and systems level advocacy.
18. Apply knowledge of occupational training models to job development and identification of relevant vocational classes for persons with disabilities.
19. Apply interpersonal communication and problem-solving skills in working with vocational instructors, community employers, and community agencies on behalf of individuals with disabilities.
20. Demonstrate the ability to analyze a variety of occupationally-relevant settings and related activities to facilitate individual's performance in those environments.
21. Demonstrate knowledge of post-school outcomes including postsecondary education, vocational training and integrated employment.

The university's role in delivering training about transition is also complicated by a scarcity of resources in rural settings such as limited job possibilities, no public transportation, and the reality that vast expanses of geographic distances must be traversed in order to perform even the most mundane of tasks such as getting groceries (Markve, Morris, Ferrara, & Rudrud, 1992). To accommodate school staffs' needs the following empowerment elements were considerations in the design of the PIT staff development program.

Empowerment Strategies

Based upon the philosophy of empowerment, the PIT model fosters the empowerment of educators to solve problems with the support of the university. This model is a derivative of the collaborative problem-solving model described in the consultation literature (see Kurpius & Fuqua, 1993; Kurpius, Fuqua, & Rozecki, 1993; West & Idol, 1993). As discussed by Westling and Whitten (1996) this means that recipients of training themselves may be the best sources for program development ideas. Five strategies promoted by Smith and his colleagues were therefore utilized to make the staff development program relevant to rural constituents and to overcome the lack of understanding of local needs by university personnel (Smith, 1996; Smith, Edelen-Smith, & Stodden, 1996). The strategies were:

1. Developing a vision statement in conjunction with the local district to focus the group on the desired outcome of the training.
2. Generating information from local groups regarding their staff development needs.
3. Designing internship experiences based upon results of educators self evaluations.
4. Having coursework culminate in action plans for district personnel
5. Conducting regular networking meetings with educators to review their efforts relating to transition.

In Tables 2, 3, 4, and Figure 1 are examples of one district's vision statement, the focus questions used to understand local concerns, the self-evaluation questions and the action plan format, respectively. As seen the vision statement related to the desired outcomes for students in the district. This statement provides a guide to the destination of the project (Senge, 1990). It was then the responsibility of university personnel to help the project participants get to their destination. The focus questions further directed project personnel to identify course content as did the self-assessment questions. The self-assessment was used to help individual project participants tailor the internship experience to their needs. Project participants were counseled to evaluate their strengths and needs so that university advisors could design or identify internship

experiences that would provide the most relevant and useful information. Thus, course instructors had to ensure that course content would complement areas of interest identified by participants. For instance, the Summer Institute for one rural district focused on three topics: team building, family involvement, and postsecondary options. Course content in the existing courses was altered to address primary concerns of participants. In fact, specific speakers and curriculum materials were selected to address concerns. There was less flexibility in three courses because they were open to all students and not just those involved in the project. But again, these courses were individualized via the final assignments which involved writing realistic action plans to be accomplished within their programs. Action plans developed by participants were reviewed to determine if they described activities that would lead to participants' vision for students. Operationalizing these strategies meant that the role of the university personnel involved in this project had to change. Information about the changes in roles is found in the section under goal 6.

Table 2.

VISION STATEMENT
To prepare students to become valued members of the community by providing experiences, information and support that enables them to identify their futures in terms of living, work, recreation and social situations.

Table 3

BOCES FOCUS QUESTIONS: Teachers 1995

1. Tell me about your work.

2. What happens to students when they leave your program?

   What adult expectations did you have for the students?

   -Work/more school

   -Friends

   -Where they will live

   -Community participation

3. What did you do with the students that seemed to really help?

   What did you do with the students that did not seem to help at all?

   What do you wish you would have/could have done to help the students?

4. Who is involved in this process?

   -Family

   -Student

5. What are some things you really want to learn that will help you?

Table 4.

TRANSITION SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Please consider and answer the following questions, which will evaluate your experience in the various transition areas.

I. ASSESSMENT Standard

1. *Systematic data collection using both formal and informal procedure*
2. *Use of assessment results for program planning*
3. *Maintains a process for communicating assessment information to involved parties*

II. Individualized Transition PLAN Standard

1. *Convenes planning teams consisting of parents, school personnel, the student, and appropriate adult service providers*
2. *Creates written individualized transition plans (ITP's)*
3. *Uses various person-centered planning strategies (e.g. - MAPS, IPS, Future Planning)*

III. PREPARATION/TRAINING Standard

1. *Modifies/enhances curriculums*
2. *Uses of a variety of instructional strategies*
3. *Delivers functional curriculum following:*
   a. *Independent living*
   b. *Recreation/leisure*
   c. *Academic*
   d. *Vocational*
   e. *Community access*
   f. *Social/interpersonal*
4. *Promotes family and student empowerment and self determination*

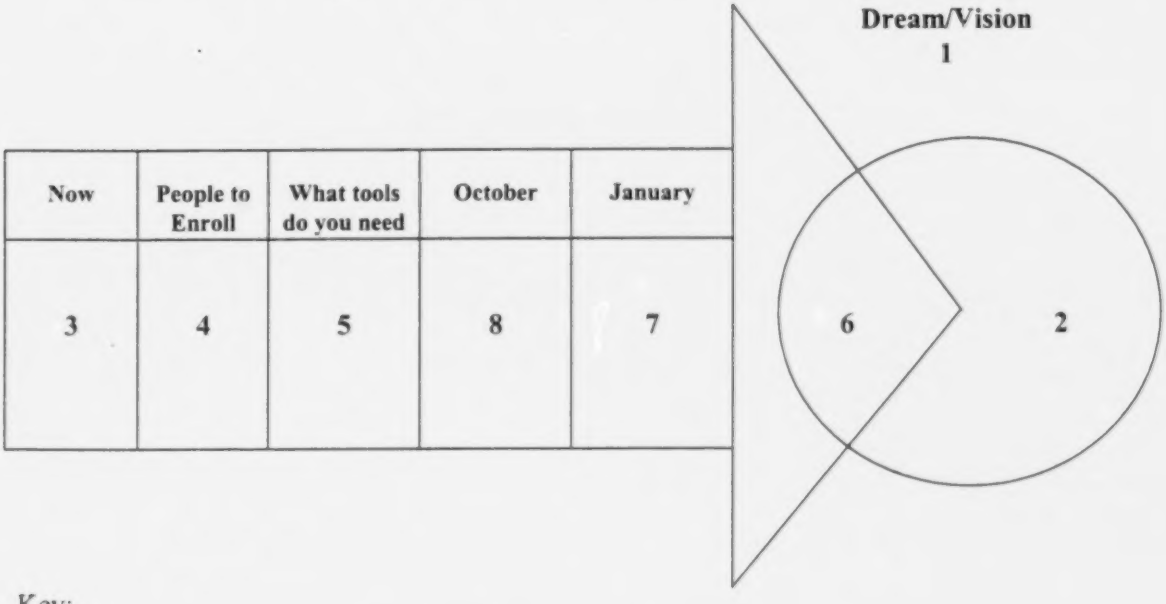
IV. COLLABORATION Standard

1. *Develops contacts and working relationships with Colorado Rehabilitation Services (vocational rehabilitation), Community Centered Boards, County Mental Health Centers, JTPA, Division of Youth Services, Community Colleges, Higher Education, etc.*
2. *Knows in-school resources such as counselors, psychologists, occupational therapists, vocational instructors, nurses, social workers, physical therapists, speech and language specialists, etc.*

V. LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT Standard

1. *Develops and communicates a shared vision for educating students with special needs.*
2. *Monitors and evaluates effectiveness of program.*
3. *Supervises paraprofessional staff.*

Figure 1.



Key:

1. What is your dream for quality transition?
2. What has happened over the last year?
3. As of today, looking at your present situation, describe transition.
4. Identify the people who can help with your vision.
5. What knowledge, skills, relationships, do you need?
6. What will you have accomplished by the end of the year?
7. What's going on now? What has happened since October?
8. Identify the steps taken, people who are supportive, what you've accomplished.

Adapted from Pearpoint, O'Brien, & Forest, 1993

Transition Specialist Certification

The certification program information developed for this project as a result of these activities are found in Appendix A. The relationship between the transition endorsement coursework and the competencies derived from the literature is shown below in Table 5.

Table 5. Transition Endorsement Coursework Content and Competencies

UNC

HRS Occupation Information and Job Placement

Transitional Competencies Addressed — 1, 7, 10, 12, 20

- understand labor markets
- able to teach job seeking skills
- able to conduct job analyses
- able to match clients with jobs
- understand the concepts and practices of supported work

CSU

Career Development Institute

Transitional Competencies Addressed — 6, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21

- able to provide career guidance to students
- accurately understand employment opportunities
- experience the world of work (students actually work in a variety of businesses)
- understand employers' expectations of schools
- contact local Chamber of Commerce
- PICs and Employment Services
- understand training needs in changing labor market

VE 590 Summer Institute

Transitional Competencies Addressed — 1, 3, 13, 15, 18, 22, 23

- become aware of cultural diversity issues that affect transition of students
- identify and design self-determination curriculum to empower students and families
- be familiar with behavior management skills including gender teaching methods
- identify and describe community issues in rural areas

VE 574 Transition and Community Based Training

Transitional Competencies Addressed — 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20

- develop outcome-oriented transitional goals for individuals with disabilities
- develop and implement functional curriculum
- adapt and modify curriculum
- environments for providing vocational programming are described (e.g., in regular vocational classes, in competitive jobs)
- place and train model is emphasized whereby related curriculum is designed to meet occupational needs of individual students
- develop skills in the area of job placement, includes job development, job analysis, job carving, job restructuring
- develop skills for promoting compatibility between worker and workplace
- emphasize need for communication, documentation and accountability between transition team members
- become aware of change process in relationship to transition

Students

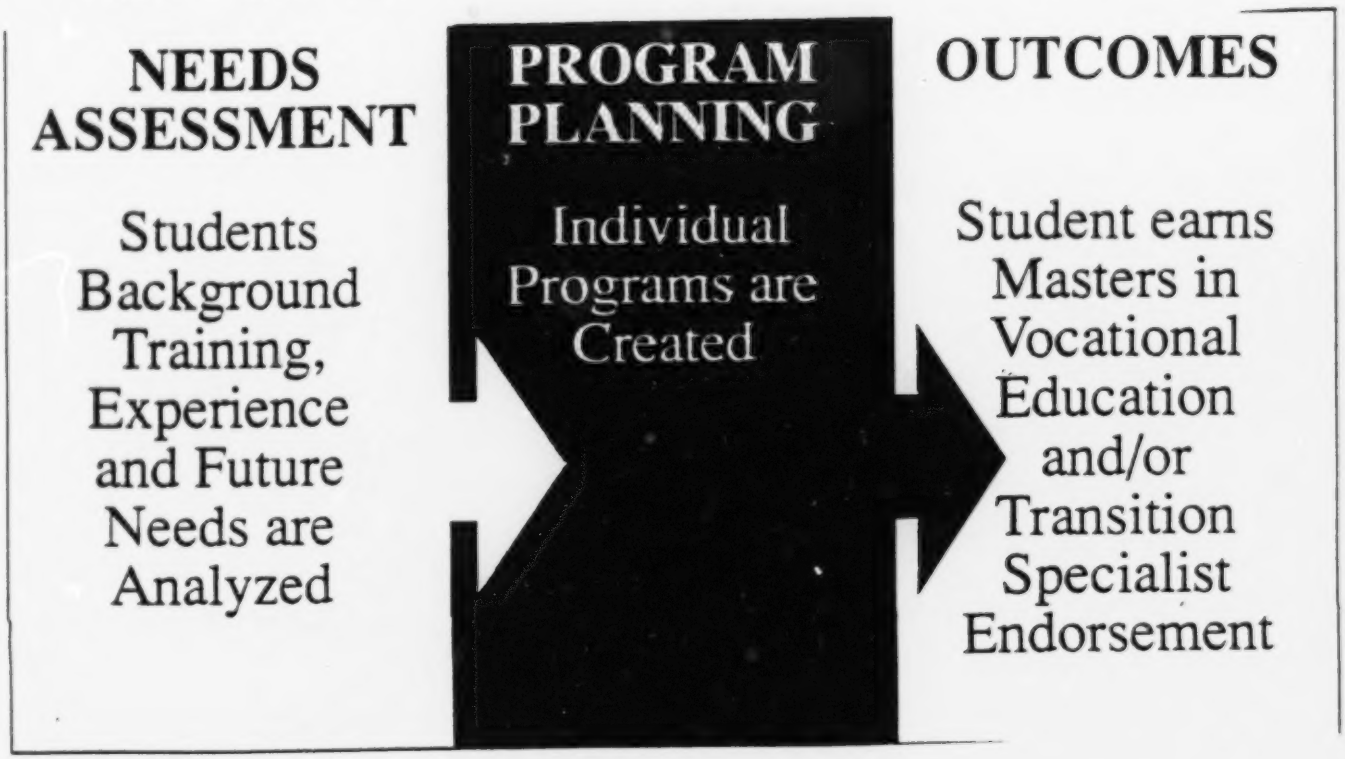
Three groups of rural students were recruited into the project, form the Weld BOCES, Pueblo and South Dakota. A total of 38 students received their Transition Specialist credential (A copy of the certificate is found in Appendix B). Their names are listed below.

Deb Anderson	Chris Ingram	Judy Parker
Linda Anderson	Christine Jones	Chrissy Peterson
Mark Berg	Kam Kolker	Barbra Rohrbach
Sue Birrenkott	Lori Laughlin	Dan Rounds
Mary Joan Bollinger	Mary Manion	Brooke Severson
Todd Christensen	Molly Leisinger	Linda Snyder
Barb Clinkscales	Marla Lucero	Dave Vogel
Thomas Cody	Bonnie McVey	Marge Voigt
Cathe Cordova	Tharyn Mulberry	John Wade
Timothy Graham	Rita O'Connor	Brenda Woodard
Dianne Hudelson	Paul Palmer	

Goal 2. To enhance a Masters degree specialization in transition within the School of Education.

Students in the masters program engaged in a similar process of assessing their individual learning needs so that the program would achieve maximum relevancy for them. As depicted in Figure 2 , information obtained from the masters students was used to advise them into appropriate courses that led also to the acquisition of transition certification and made them eligible for Colorado State vocational credentials.

Figure 2. Program Paths


NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Students Background Training, Experience and Future Needs are Analyzed
PROGRAM PLANNING
Individual Programs are Created
OUTCOMES
Student earns Masters in Vocational Education and/or Transition Specialist Endorsement

Students

During the recruitment of students a mentor was hired to encourage people and support people from different ethnic backgrounds to enter in to the masters program. A description of the mentor was provided in each of the packets given to prospective graduate students (this packet is found in Appendix C). Ten students enrolled in the PIT masters specialization:

Stacy Abate	Debra La Pera
Jan Brown (Cordova)	Cheryl Sahlen
Elliot Cisneros	Julie Sharp
Christine Jones	Jane Slezak
Bernie Moreno Graves	Cathy Wise

Titles of selected thesis/professional papers written as a part of this project that contribute to the literature are:

- Educating the Deaf; Determining Appropriate Placements

* Communication Between Families and Systems
* Using Person-centered Planning for Systems Change
* Effective Practices for Job Developers
* Designing an Instrument to Evaluate the High School Moderate Needs Curriculum
* Comparison of Youth Participation in School to Work Alliance Program and State Mandated Profile
* Accessing Colorado Colleges for Individuals with Disabilities

Because most of the students were already teaching and indicated that their districts had no formal job description outlining the duties of a transition specialists, masters students developed their own descriptions which is found in Table 6. Every student was also responsible for designing a brochure describing the services their transition program was or would offer to students, families and the community.

Table 6. Job Description Summary

A Transition Specialist is a:

Program Developer/Evaluator
- Knowledgeable of relevant laws
- Evaluates student's needs
- Evaluates program outcomes
- Provides staff development to peers & para-professionals
- Assesses labor market and identifies potential job prospects

Advocate/Public Relations
- Promotes program to others including community, employers, school, family
- Facilitates student's success via community/school integration efforts

Liaison/coordinator
- To family, employers, adult service agencies, administrators, other teachers, other professionals (OT, speech & language)

Trainer/Facilitator
- Designs and delivers curriculum related to work/school, play/leisure, community relationships
- facilitates transition planning
- Assesses students

Goal 3. To develop a transition focus area in the occupational therapy Master's program to increase the knowledge of occupational therapists regarding functional capacities and transition service needs of persons with disabilities.

OT students involved in this projects were required to complete their masters thesis research in an areas related to the transition of people with special needs and then to complete one of their mandatory three field experiences in a transition -related setting. With their on-site training with the participants, their research and their fieldwork, the OT graduates are entering the field-based OT with the skills to create major change in the role of the OT.

Students

Four students participated in the project: Barb Hultgren, Liz Leipold, Tasha Allen, and Anne Tellez.

One of the outcomes of their work was the development of a flyer found in Appendix D describing the potential role of the OT in the transition process. Information about the how the internships created collaborative relationships between OTs and educators is best illustrated by the following two examples:

Example #1:

> An occupational therapy graduate student was paired with a junior high special education teacher who was wanting to develop more community-based functional learning activities for her students. The OT student had years of experience in teaching persons with physical and cognitive disabilities to downhill ski. The students the teacher worked with had primarily emotional disabilities. The teacher, herself, was an avid outdoors woman. The two women decided that the students would spend the fall semester planning a ski trip for the winter.
>
> During the fall months the students worked with the teacher and OT student to plan every single tiny detail of their ski trip. This included conditioning exercises (including weight training and coordination/balancing), budgeting, shopping, fund-raising, transportation arrangements, and public relations. The students gained skills in areas of reading, mathematics, science, public specking, community awareness, and recreation. The trip itself, while extremely fun, was almost an afterthought of a tremendous learning experience. The partnership between the teacher and the OT was a complete collaborative and cooperative effort- true teaming.

Example #2:

> A rural high school education teacher was working on job development and placement for her caseload of students. While she busily made her community contacts, and set up potential work sites, she realized that she was missing information on skills and interests of some of her students. She asked the

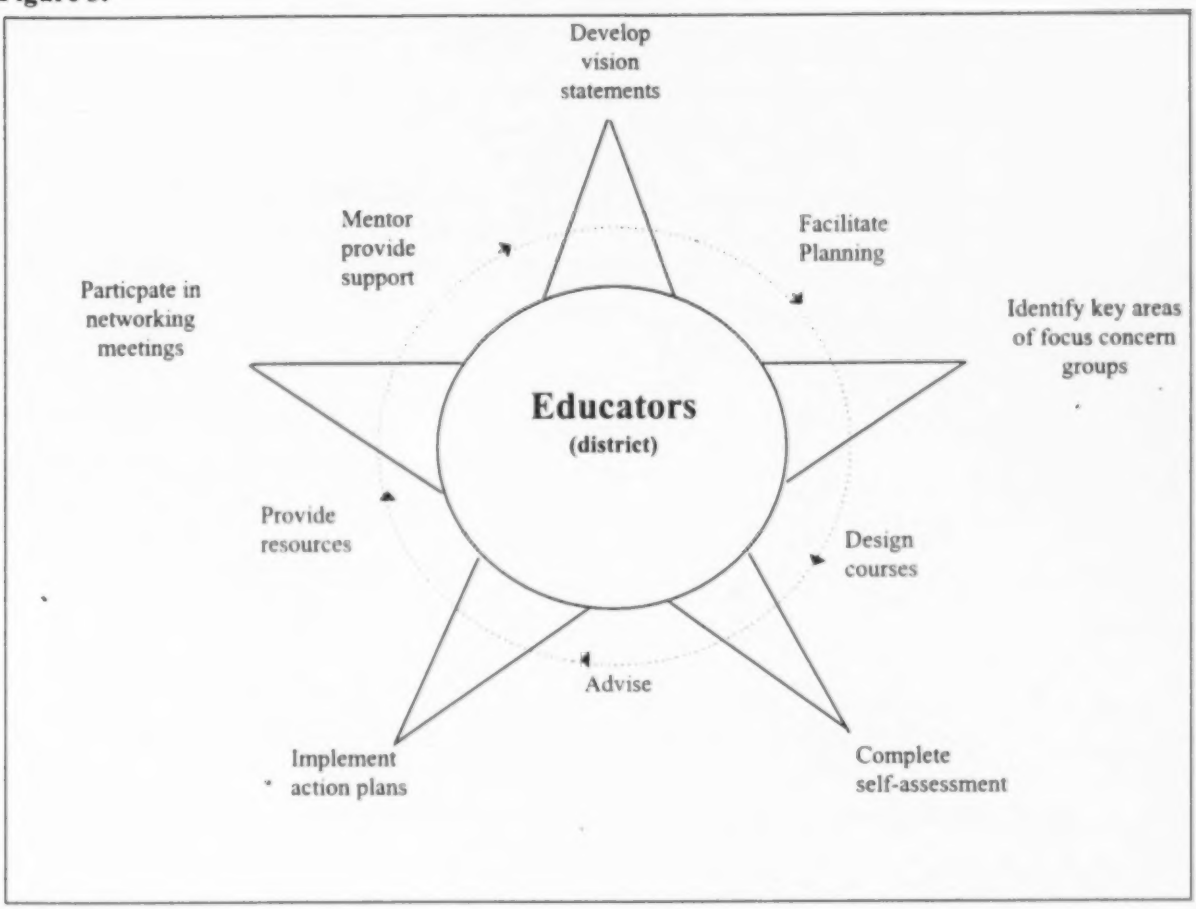
OT graduate student who had been assigned to her to assist in doing some assessments with a few of her students.

The OT student spend several hours conducting both standardized and community-based assessments with students (with support from university OT faculty), based on the stated work interests of the students. The teacher and students left the assessment process with a much clearer picture of potential work environments. The teacher also now feels much more comfortable adding OT to a student's educational team. Additionally, the OT student was able to gain some experience in conducting assessments, and choosing assessment activities which best meet the needs of students.

Goal 4. To provide technical assistance to school districts to upgrade the skills of their staff in the area of transition for persons with disabilities.

From this project a model has emerged for providing inservice, preservice, and technical assistance training. Although this model is not confined to rural districts, it represents decisions made to address rural concerns. The model was originated to understand rural needs and attempts to address problems such as understanding the context in which transition is occurring in local areas and creating a relationship between schools not in close proximity to bastions of higher education Thus, distance learning and condensed courses have become integrated into the Colorado State University course offerings. On a broader level, the model represents elements important to all types of programs effecting change (Fullan, 1993). On a more practical level, a survey was designed and administered to all PIT participants about their knowledge and use of technology. Results of the surveys are still being compiled but initial results were used to design electronic technical assistance support between university staff and districts.

Figure 3.



<u>Goal 5.</u> To provide training opportunities for rural vocational instructors, occupational therapists, vocational rehabilitation counselors and special educators to earn the transition specials endorsement.

A variety of training activities were provided to educators as a part of this project. For example, as shown in Table 7 courses were modified to accommodate rural needs. This means condensed courses were offered during summer months, courses were offered in the districts, and interactive video courses were developed Additionally, a new advising process was implemented that relied more heavily on telephone contacts and the use of e-mail. New advising forms found in Appendix E were designed to maintain a greater paper trail and rely less on less face-to-face contact.

Table 7. University Training Opportunities

Course	Content	Delivery Modality
Internship	- decided between advisor/student based on self-assessment	anytime in district
Transition and Community-based Instruction	- overview transition - job development - teacher roles - interagency coordination - families - empowerment	condensed 2 week course offered during the summers
Vocational Assessment	- alternative assessment processes -traditional assessment - collecting data - interpreting information	condensed during the year - weekends, packet given to students for self-study
Career Development Institute	-labor market issues -employment opportunities - employment services (Chamber of Commerce, PICS) - experience select businesses	summer - 2 weeks
Summer Institute	- content derived from focus groups	condensed into 1 week summer course

As shown in Table 7 university training opportunities is comprised of five courses. Four of these courses, Field Placement or Internship, Transition and Community-Based Instruction, Career Development Institute, and Vocational Assessment were already a part of the School of Education and the Occupational Therapy's department offerings. These courses were chosen because they could be used by special education staff to become credentialed vocationally and because their content matched that found in the literature as being critical to the knowledge base within transition services (Kohler, 1994). The fifth course, Summer Institute, was designed specifically for this project.

In addition to these training opportunities were also generated through agencies external to the university. An Alternative Cooperative Education class was offered by the Colorado Community Colleges and Occupation System as an off-campus course in response to needs found during the course of this project. This course was offered for CSU credit. The university of Minnesota also collaborated by providing a workshop about maintaining computerized student stacking systems in districts.

Goal 6. Administer, evaluate, and disseminate the program in and effective and efficiently manner.

Evaluation

The PIT project is evaluated on two different levels. First, the process of the project was evaluated in an on-going fashion. Project staff met one each month at a minimum to review the goals of the project, to determine progress towards the goals, and to plan for future project activities. Additionally, each condensed course is aggressively evaluated at each step by the participants, to make certain that all activities are addressing their self-identified needs. On-site visits by project staff to participants provide many informal activities to receive feedback concerning the efficacy of the project's staff and their support activities. Finally, on a quarterly basis, the entire team met to network with each other, report on on-going activities, and create new lists of support needs.

The second level of evaluation involves the creation of products. The PIT project agreed to develop lists of completed research projects, systems change activities, manuscripts, degreed students, credentialed participants, and dissemination/replication activities. These lists are compiled on an annual basis, and show the U.S. Department of Education that the project is functioning as proposed.

As shown in Table 8, a formal evaluation was used to understand how the project was faring. Reflection and evaluations over the past three years have shown this project staff the weaknesses inherent in the model that need to be remedied. These deficiencies can be attributed to university barriers, district-level barriers, and educator resistance. At the university, the short-term nature of the project was a problem; districts only received intense support during one year and then another district was recruited. Longer-term relationships would have increased the amount of change. Ideally, schools and universities could develop partnerships similar to those being promulgated in teacher Licensure programs called professional development schools. This is more difficult at the graduate level (all courses offered during this project were graduate courses). Unfortunately, many of the activities such as technical assistance and network meetings were sponsored by the grant and not typical graduate program activities traditionally financially supported by universities.

In terms of the districts, clearly administrative support was an issue. In some districts even the special education administration was lacking in knowledge about the laws and mandates surrounding the area of transitional services. Therefore, they were not supportive of teachers teaching anything other than academics. Clearly, in future projects, as recommended by Smith, et al. (1996), many constituents need to be involved in making public commitments to

incorporating transition services into their systems including families, students, local community members, administrators, and regular educators. Further, a limited amount of resources in districts prevented occupational therapists (OT) from fulfilling a greater role in providing transition services. Project staff initially hoped that occupational therapists would become key members on transition teams. But soon it became apparent that districts allotted OT time primarily to the elementary grades for "motor activities" and were not able to reallocate some of this time to secondary programs. And finally, educators themselves posed resistance to necessary changes. Teachers were often unwilling to try a new strategy or forgive perceived slights remembered from years past in order to deliver transition services to students. They did not seem to want to be empowered to make decisions. Some of these problems are surmountable but others reflect the reality of day-today operations in local schools that will probably always exist. Overall, however, this project succeeded in identifying and using strategies that foster the empowerment of educators wanting to improve their programs and the outcomes for students.

Table 8. Evaluation Survey

PARTNERS IN TRANSITION
Evaluation Survey

Courses

1. Do you feel the coursework has been sufficient to assist you in becoming a "Transition Specialist"? In what ways has it or hasn't it? Please address only the actual courses.

2. What changes would you like to see in the courses?

Internships

3. Discuss your internship, and whether it has been a helpful learning experience for you.

Networking

4. Do you think the periodic gatherings have been helpful for sharing, brainstorming, gathering support, and receiving encouragement?

Technical Assistance

5. In what ways has the staff from the Partners in Transition project provided technical assistance to you during this school year?

Administrative Support

6. In what ways has your school district been supportive of your efforts this past year?

Team Configurations

7. Do you feel that the team of people trained from your district was the correct group of individuals?

Special Education and Occupational Therapy (This question is for the teachers who have been working with the occupational therapy students this school year)

8. Do you have a better understanding of how teachers and occupational therapists can work together?

There have also been many positive outcomes from this project. The development of a partnership between local districts and universities is powerful and a goal of most current education reform movements. Collaborating has enabled the program to understand the real issues prevalent in districts and local communities. It also pushes districts to look more globally for answers in finding ways to help their students receive a good education. As shown in Table 9 below the role of the University personnel involved in this project shifted as a result of district needs. Empowering educators involves a willingness to include people as equals and begins a process of growth for all (Smith, Edelen-Smith, & Stodden, 1996; Smith & Stodden, 1994). The university role in this project became one of assisting districts to arrive at a plan for implementing transition services. It was also important for the university to review these plans during regular networking meetings. It was during these meetings, as well as during technical assistance visits, that the university became aware of resources needed by districts to continue working infusing transition information and procedures into their programs. Technical assistance also allowed project staff to prod educators along and to reassure them of the value of their efforts. Evaluating and reflecting upon the project was also in the purview of university staff. But perhaps the most important role of the university was that of providing credibility to the efforts of educators to their administrator and peers as they changed their own roles to become more acquainted with the community and less involved in transitional classroom activities. This role of university staff was the same as that of the "critical friend" described by Smith, Edelen-Smith & Stodden (1996). University personnel met with school principals, assisted with writing brochures to advertise programs, and connected schools with state departments of education or other state offices that could assist them. Being a critical friend meant that the university was collaborating with the district. As a consequence of this partnership, members of the university team realized the importance of gaining schools' administration support and began advocating at the university for changes in the administration licensing programs to include more information about special needs and the change process.

Table 9.

University Roles
Facilitate Planning
• orchestrate team visioning
• guide action planning
• schedule network meetings
Provide Resources
• offer technical assistance-deliver courses
• assist with public relations
• evaluate project
Maintain Support
• provide credibility to school administration/peers
• advocate for changes in preservice education
• collaborate in identifying a training agenda

Dissemination

At the completion of this project both CSU faculty members were tenured and the transition specialist program has been included as an integral part of the School of Education masters programming. In addition, throughout the project, project staff have presented and published information about the project nationally in the interest of informing others about the work. These works are listed below. Another manuscript is in process as well.

Presentations

Lehmann, J. P. & Nelson, R. E. (1996). Redefining Vocational Assess to be an Integral Part of Special Needs Programs. NAVESNP Regional Conference, Portland, OR.

Lehmann, J. P. & Hyatt, J. (1996). Partners in Transition: Preparing Transition Specialists. NAVESNP Regional Conference, Portland, OR.

Hyatt, J. & Sample, P. (1996). Partners in Transition: Preparing Transition Specialists. ACRES National Conference, Baltimore, MD.

Lehmann, J. P. & Hyatt, J. (1997). Partners in Transition: Empowering Teachers to Provide Transition Services. National ACRES Conference, San Antonio, TX.

Publications

Sample, P., Lehmann, J. P., & Hyatt, J. (1996). Partners in Transition: Preparing Transition Specialists. ACRES Conference Proceedings, Baltimore, MD.

Lehmann, J. P., Hyatt, J., & Sample, P. (1997). Partners in Transition: Empowering Teachers to Provide Transition Services. Proceedings from the National ACRES Conference, San Antonio, TX.

IV. SUMMARY

Facilitating a smooth transition from school to adult life for students with disabilities is a goal high schools are directed to perform by federal legislation (see IDEA, 1990). Meeting the letter of the law requires that teachers and administrators be knowledgeable and interested in this aspect of their work. However, several studies have shown that neither group is perceived as proficient in this arena (Lombard, Hazelkorn, & Neubert, 1992). In fact, Baer, Simmons, and Flexner (1996) concluded from their survey that school districts tend to comply with paperwork requirements of the law but are not actually providing adequate transition experiences for students with disabilities.

Reasons for the inadequacies are many. Historically, special education teachers, related services such as occupational therapy, and their respective administrations have had little training regarding the nature and procedures relative to the quality of transition services (Greene Albright, Kokaska, & Beecham-Greene, 1991). Furthermore, resources needed to support students to enter into jobs, learn to live independently, and develop relationships with local communities are meager at best. Similar problems in delivering transition services to high school students plague rural school districts as well. Thus, the purpose of this project was to design a collaborative effort between a university education department and an occupational therapy department to provide rural school districts with staff development in the area of transition from school to adulthood. Results from reflection and evaluations have shown the project staff the magnitude of their success in upgrading educators' skills related to the area of transition. This project also promoted change at the university level.

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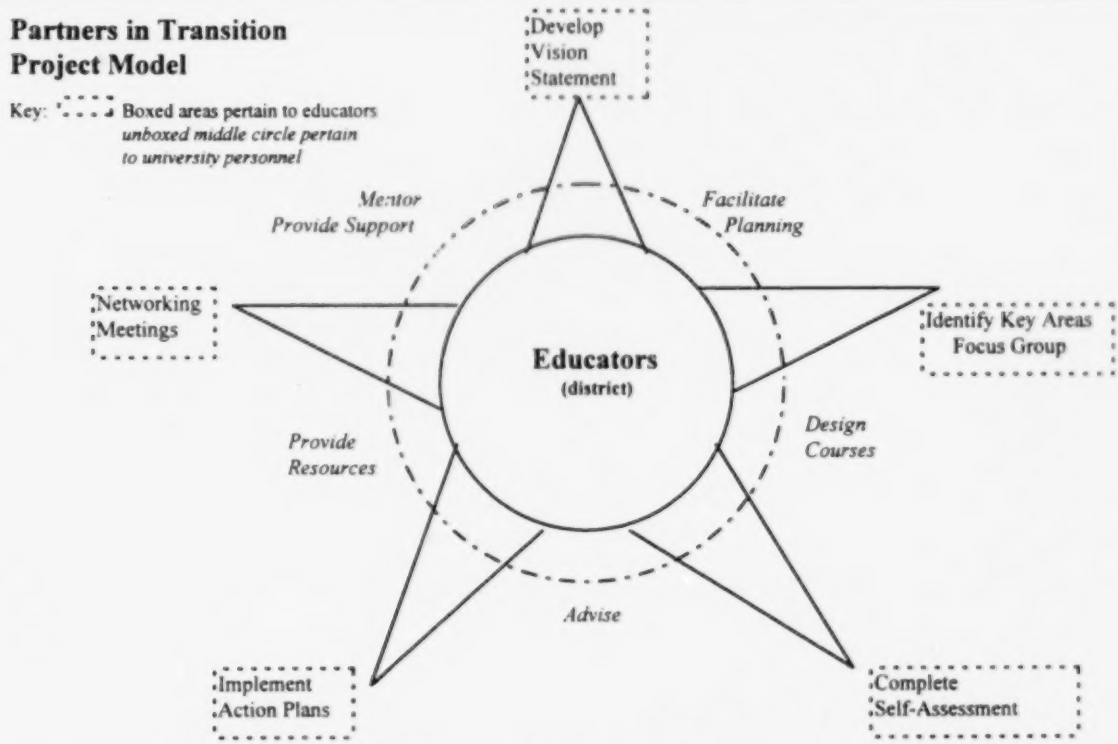
Empowering Teachers to Provide Transition Services

The purpose of this session is to describe a model of staff development about transition services for students with disabilities. The Partners in Transition model fosters the empowerment of educators in their local district to effectively redefine their roles with the support of university personnel.

The objectives of this presentation are to:

a. **Provide a general overview of a staff development program implemented by using distance education techniques.**
b. **Describe the role of university personnel that evolved during the course of the project and was defined by secondary school educators.**
c. **Report specific strategies used to empower secondary educators as they identified how the transition process could be integrated into their schools.**
d. **Present a model for delivering inservice/preservice courses developed as a result of this project.**
e. **Discuss problems associated with the acceptance of this model.**

Partners in Transition Project Model



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